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ABSTRACT

This report examines certain home cultural factors, cultural orientations, and learning preferences of African American school children from low-income backgrounds in order to document the relationship of prior cultural socialization experiences to enhanced cognitive, performance, and motivational outcomes. A conceptual basis is suggested for the ways certain Afro-American cultural themes (Movement, Communalism, and Verve) are transmitted and acquired in low-income African American children's proximal experiences outside of school and the consequences of such acquisitions on the children's orientation and preferences for learning. Subjects were 18 second graders, 40 third graders, and 40 fifth graders for the studies of communalism and movement, and 25 third graders and 40 fifth graders for the study of students' verve. The report documents the cultural integrity residing in the experiences of African American children from low-income backgrounds and offers ways to build on these assets proactively to enhance school achievement. (Contains 12 tables and 29 references.) (Author/SLD)

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CRESPAR

THE ROLE OF CULTURAL FACTORS IN SCHOOL RELEVANT COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING

Description of Home Environmental Factors, Cultural Orientations, and Learning Preferences

A. Wade Boykin

Caryn T. Bailey

Report No. 43 / April 2000

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CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS PLACED AT RISK

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Every child has the capacity to succeed in school and in life. Yet far too many children, especially those from low-income backgrounds, are placed at risk by school practices that are based on a sorting paradigm in which some students receive high-expectations instruction while the rest are relegated to lower quality education and lower quality futures. The sorting perspective must be replaced by a "talent development" model that asserts that all children are capable of succeeding in a rich and demanding curriculum with appropriate assistance and support.

The mission of the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR) is to conduct the research, development, evaluation, and dissemination needed to transform schooling for students placed at risk. The work of the Center is guided by three central themes — ensuring the success of all students at key development points, building on students' personal and cultural assets, and scaling up effective programs — and conducted through research and development programs in the areas of early and elementary studies; middle and high school studies; school, family, and community partnerships; and systemic supports for school reform, as well as a program of institutional activities.

CRESPAR is organized as a partnership of Howard University and Johns Hopkins University, and supported by the National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students (At-Risk Institute), one of five institutes created by the Educational Research, Development, Dissemination and Improvement Act of 1994 and located within the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) at the U.S. Department of Education. The At-Risk Institute supports a range of research and development activities designed to improve the education of students at risk of educational failure because of limited English proficiency, poverty, race, geographic location, or economic disadvantage.

Abstract

This report examines certain home cultural factors, cultural orientations, and learning preferences of African American school children from low-income backgrounds in order to document the relationship of prior cultural socialization experiences to enhanced cognitive, performance, and motivational outcomes. The authors attempt to offer a conceptual basis for how certain Afro-cultural themes — Movement, Communalism, and Verve — in low-income African American children's proximal experiences outside of school are transmitted and acquired, and the consequences of such acquisitions on their orientation and preferences for learning. Specifically, this research documents the cultural integrity residing in the experiences of African American children from low-income backgrounds and offers ways to proactively build upon these assets for enhancing school achievement.

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Introduction

The Cultural Factors in School Relevant Cognitive Functioning Project was launched to conduct experimental research investigating the validity of the claim that for many African American children from low-income backgrounds, cognitive performance can be enhanced in contexts thematically characterized by aspects of Afro-cultural ethos. It further seeks to determine: (a) the range of conditions that produce, amplify, or undermine these enhancement effects; (b) the psychological processes that undergird them; (c) the individual and group difference factors that inform them; and (d) the socialization factors that antecede them. The cultural themes of primary interest to the researchers were Communalism, Movement, and Verve. The ultimate aim of this project is to systematically introduce these themes into classroom pedagogy and to later gauge the resultant academic outcomes. The Cultural Factors project has employed various task conditions that are informed by these themes, and has addressed a range of cognitive tasks that reflect the types of academic challenges many children face in school. Moreover, a battery of instruments has been developed to measure the children's orientation toward or preference for the various Afro-cultural themes, as well as their motivational experience while working in the various task contexts.

The research detailed in this report systematically examines certain home cultural factors, cultural orientations, and learning preferences of African American school children in order to document the relationship of prior cultural socialization experiences to the enhanced cognitive, performance, and motivational outcomes obtained in earlier research conducted by the authors (Boykin & Bailey, 2000). This research attempts to offer a conceptual basis to explain how certain Afro-cultural themes in African American children's proximal experiences outside of school are transmitted and acquired. It further seeks to illustrate the consequences of such acquisitions on these children's orientation and preferences for learning. Third, it attempts to document the cultural integrity residing in the experiences of African American children from low-income backgrounds and offer ways to proactively build upon that integrity as a means of enhancing these children's school achievement.

Objectives

The purpose of this investigation was threefold. First, in order to systematically analyze home socialization activities and children's learning orientations and preferences, it was necessary to develop theoretically sound, internally reliable, self-reported measures of the Afro-cultural constructs which bear on the conceptual scheme. The instruments were designed to measure prevailing cultural values and practices characterized within the home environment, as well as African American children's personal cultural orientation and

preference for the particular cultural themes in learning contexts. The second objective of this research was to examine the extent to which these Afro-cultural themes are valued and practiced by family members in the home environment and its relationship to the endorsed cultural values, orientation, and preferred learning practices of African American children from low-income backgrounds. Lastly, this research attempted to provide a descriptive analysis of African American children's home socialization experiences, endorsed values, practices, and preferred learning contexts in an attempt to gain insight regarding their potentially proactive contribution to enhanced learning and achievement outcomes. The outline for the report is presented below.

Review of the Literature

Section 1. Cultural Context Conceptualization and Measures
- A. Communalism Context
- B. Movement Context
- C. Verve Context

Section 2. Methods
- A. Refinement of the Instruments
- B. Sample Characteristics
  - Communalism and Movement Sample
  - Verve/Physical Stimulation Sample
- C. Study Design

Section 3. Results
- A. Analysis of Internal Consistency
- B. Analysis of Relationships
- C. Analysis of Mean Difference
- D. Descriptive Analysis
  - Overall and Subscale Means
  - Frequency Distribution

Section 4. Discussion of the Findings

Review of the Literature

It has been argued that to better understand children's thought and actions, one must first appreciate the cultural environment in which these activities occur (Boykin, 1995; Greeno, 1989; Rogoff, 1990). Researchers further maintain that children participate in contexts that are largely informed or structured by cultural themes. As Peters and Boggs (1986) contend, these themes are manifested in children's lives as they engage in daily routines and interactions that are often guided by older peers or adults. Children also come to attach a positive valence to the pertinent activities and underlying thematic messages associated with these activities. As a consequence, they appropriate or incorporate these cultural themes into their meaning systems and utilize them to organize and guide their practices, behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions (D'Andrade, 1990; Serpell & Boykin, 1994). Cultural themes also characterize sites for the practice of cognitive activities and the exercise and development of competencies. Therefore, in the incorporation of Afro-cultural themes into cognitive performance contexts, African American children may be more apt to demonstrate existing and emerging cognitive skills and have positive motivational and attitudinal orientations toward specific task demands.

To systematically analyze the influence of cultural factors in the home environment on children's learning orientations and preferences, reliable, theoretically sound measures of the Afro-cultural constructs that bear on the proposed conceptual scheme were needed. Thus, the first objective of this research was to further refine and examine the internal consistency and reliability of three home environment and three cultural orientation and learning preference measures of the targeted Afro-cultural themes: Communalism, Movement, and Verve. Second, this study sought to examine the extent to which these themes were valued and practiced in the home environments of African American children from low-income backgrounds and informed these children's cultural orientation and learning preferences. Third, the study attempted to provide a descriptive analysis of African American children's home socialization experiences, endorsed values and practices, and learning preferences in hopes of gaining insight into the potentially proactive contribution of these factors to enhanced learning and achievement outcomes.

The three postulated Afro-cultural themes are conceived as follows: Communalism denotes the importance or priority placed on social bonds and interconnectedness with others or fundamental interdependence; Movement conveys the premium placed upon the interconnectedness of movement expressiveness, dance, percussiveness, rhythm, and syncopated music; Verve is a particular receptiveness or preference for heightened levels of physical stimulation.

SECTION 1: CULTURAL CONTEXT

A. Communalism Context

Conceptualization

Communalism denotes an awareness of the fundamental interdependence of people. That is, the importance or priority individuals place on their social bonds and interconnectedness with others (Boykin, 1986). The belief that people are bonded implies mutuality or that everyone is looking out for each others' best interests. The notion of fundamental interdependence serves as the basis for Communalism and is conveyed in each of its four dimensions: social orientation, group duty, identity, and sharing.

Social orientation connotes an acculturation toward social relations rather than objects as fundamental to life. Group duty refers to the notion that one's obligation to one's social group is more important than individual rights and privileges. Hence, one's identity is tied to group membership rather than to individual status and possessions. Lastly, sharing is promoted within the communalism context because it affirms the importance of social interconnectedness. Fostering cooperation is encouraged, whereas self-centeredness and individual greed are discouraged.

Measures

The *Home Communalism Measure (HCM)* evaluates children's perception of the level of communal beliefs and activities endorsed by members in the home environment (Boykin & Pippin, 1997). The HCM contains 20 scenario-based items that are equally divided into four subscales, each coinciding with a dimension of the communalism construct. A sample scale item is: "People in my house often ask each other to do things together. We usually do things as a group rather than by ourselves. We usually come together at least once a day. Is your family like this?" The scale items are rated along a four-point continuum ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly agree). The overall HCM score is the mean of the responses.

A modified version of the scenario-based *Personal Beliefs and Behaviors Measure (PBBM)* developed by Dill and Boykin (in press) was designed to gauge students' endorsement of communal attitudes and practices (Boykin & Pippin, 1997). Two versions of the PBBM were constructed, one depicting female characters in the scenarios and the other depicting male characters. The measure consists of 20 scenarios which are divided equally into four subscales, each representing a communal dimension. An example of a scenario item is: "Carmen/Carl feels that everybody in the group benefits when people work together. She/He also believes that the group should support each one of its members." Students rate how much the character described in each scenario is like themselves. Responses are measured along a four-point scale

ranging from 1 (Not at all like me) to 4 (Very much like me). The overall PBBM score is the mean of the item responses.

B. Movement Context

Conceptualization

A high-movement context denotes one in which a premium is placed upon the interwoven mosaic of movement expressiveness, percussiveness, rhythm, and syncopated music (Boykin, 1995). Movement expressiveness can be understood in terms of three qualities or dimensions. First, a rhythmic orientation toward life is manifested in speech patterns, movements, dance and music preferences, and patterns of activity. Second, movement and music, conceived either independently or joined in coordination, are viewed as important ways of engaging life and deemed vital to one's psychological health. Lastly implied is a receptiveness toward a rich and expansive movement and gestural repertoire, which encompasses kinesthetically complex displays of simultaneous, often coordinated motion. Music is syncopated when the emphasis is placed systematically on the off-beat, often in the context of polyrhythmic displays.

Measures

The *Home Movement Expressive Questionnaire (HMEQ)* was designed to assess children's reports of the level of home movement expressive attitudes and practices endorsed by their family members in their homes (Boykin & Mungai-Kamau, 1997). The HMEQ contains 18 items and three subscales, each reflecting a dimension of the movement construct. Examples of the scale items are: "How often is there a lot of movement in your home?" "How often do people in your home move their bodies a lot when they talk?" and "How often does listening and moving to music seem to make people in your home feel good?" The scale ratings range from 1 (Almost never) to 5 (Almost always). The overall HMEQ score is the mean of the responses.

The *Child Activity Questionnaire (CAQ)* assesses students' perceptions of their movement-expressiveness and orientation (Bailey, 1999). The instrument was revised for this study to increase the number of movement-expressive activities for each of the three subscales. Sample items from the instrument are: "How often do you prefer for your body to be moving?" "How often do you move your body a lot when you talk?" and "How often does music that you enjoy put you in a good mood?" The scale items are rated along a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Almost never) to 5 (Almost always). The overall CAQ score is the mean of the responses.

C. Verve (Physical Stimulation) Context

Conceptualization

Through both informal and systematic observations, the home environments of many African American children have been characterized by Afro-cultural themes that include an emphasis on affective or emotional expressiveness, communal bonding, and especially on the significance of movement, music, and percussiveness. It is posited that the essence of these Afro-cultural themes, taken together, may result in the cultivation of a relatively high level of physical stimulation or psychological verve. A consequence of one's participation in such a "lively" environment may be the development of particular receptiveness toward or preference for heightened levels of such stimulation (Boykin, 1983).

Verve can best be understood in terms of the following qualities of physical stimulation: (a) intensity or liveliness, (b) variability, and (c) density. The first of these refers to the loudness of the stimulation or the vigor of one's behavior. The second connotes the level of variety of or alternation among the activities or stimuli in one's environment. The third relates to the number of stimulus or background elements, or the number of activities simultaneously present in one's environment.

Measures

The *Home Stimulation Perception Questionnaire (HSP)* measures students' perceptions of how often their family members engage in vervistic activities at home (Bailey, 1997). This instrument was revised to increase the number of activities for each of the three verve dimensions. The HSP consists of 23 items which are rated on a five-point scale, from 1 (Almost never) to 5 (Almost always"). The overall HSPQ score is the mean of the item responses.

The *Questionnaire of Stimuli Preference (QSP)* was designed to assess students' level of preference for varying physical stimulus school contexts and activities (Bailey, 1997). Specifically, the QSP measures students' preferences for vervistic pedagogical practices, ways of learning, and activities across classroom, recreational, and social contexts at school. The scale's 18 items form three subscales that represent the three verve dimensions. Each item contains three responses, each representing a different level of the described physical stimulation. The items are scored from 1 to 3, with 1 indicating preference for the lowest-stimulus response, and 3 indicating preference for the highest-stimulus response. The overall QSP score is the mean of the item responses.

SECTION 2: METHODS

A. Refinement of the Instruments

Prior to conducting the present study, the six measures of communalism, movement, and verve were further refined to better assess the distinctive home cultural experiences and learning orientations and preferences of African American children from low-income backgrounds. Scale items were generated to measure attitudes and practices related to the particular dimensions of each of the three targeted Afro-cultural constructs. For example, items measuring a social orientation, group duty, group identity, and sharing were added to the communalism measures (i.e., HCM and PBBM). Similarly, items assessing the interrelatedness of movement and rhythmic music, the importance of movement and music to psychological well-being, and receptiveness to an expansive movement repertoire were included in the HCM and CAQ movement scales. Lastly, the HSP and QSP contained additional items evaluating the intensity, variability, and density of physical stimulation.

B. Sample Characteristics

Two student cohorts participated in the three studies. The first was involved in both the communalism and movement studies while the second participated exclusively in the verve study. A description of each sample is provided below.

Communalism and Movement Sample

Eighteen second grade, 40 third grade, and 40 fifth grade African American students from low-income backgrounds from two District of Columbia Public Schools constituted the sample for the communalism and movement investigations. Low-income status was determined by students' participation in either free or reduced-price lunch programs. Sample characteristics, such as the students' grade level, gender, and age level are delineated for each school in Table 1.

Verve Sample

Thirty-five third grade and 40 fifth grade African American students from low-income backgrounds were employed in the verve investigation. All of the students attended the same District of Columbia public school and were participants in either free or reduced-price lunch programs. Table 2 provides a detailed description of this sample's characteristics.

Table 1
Sample Characteristics
Communalism and Movement-Expressiveness Studies

School #1 (n=18)				School #2 (n=80)										
2nd Grade (n=18)				3rd Grade (n=40)					5th Grade (n=40)					
Female (n=6)		Male (n=12)		Female (n=22)		Male (n=18)			Female (n=25)			Male (n=15)		
7 yrs (n=4)	8 yrs (n=2)	7 yrs (n=10)	8 yrs (n=2)	8 yrs (n=17)	9 yrs (n=5)	8 yrs (n=12)	9 yrs (n=3)	10 yrs (n=3)	9 yrs (n=1)	10 yrs (n=15)	11 yrs (n=5)	10 yrs (n=8)	11 yrs (n=5)	12 yrs (n=2)

Table 2
Sample Characteristics
Verve Study

3rd Grade (n=35)					5th Grade (n=40)					
Female (n=19)		Male (n=16)			Female (n=19)		Male (n=21)			
8 yrs (n=11)	9 yrs (n=8)	8 yrs (n=4)	9 yrs (n=11)	10 yrs (n=1)	10 yrs (n=12)	11 yrs (n=7)	10 yrs (n=7)	11 yrs (n=10)	12 yrs (n=3)	13 yrs (n=1)

C. Study Design

The three investigations examined the psychometric soundness of the communalism, movement, and verve home environment and cultural orientation/learning preference measures. In each study, students were randomly selected from their classrooms and escorted by a school administrator to a private room for testing. The students were tested in grade-homogeneous groups. After a brief introduction and overview of the testing procedures, the experimenter and two assistants administered the measures. The order of protocol administration was predetermined by a counterbalancing sequence. The experimenter read aloud each of the scale items as the students read along to themselves. The students were instructed to circle the response that best represented their attitudes and experiences. After the completion of the testing session, the students were escorted back to their classrooms by a school administrator. Each testing session lasted approximately 45 minutes.

Results

A. Reliability of Measure

Reliability analyses were performed to determine the internal consistency of the measures. The alpha reliability coefficients of all the measures were generally within acceptable ranges. The results of these analyses for the three studies are presented in Table 3.

B. Analysis of Relationships

Correlation analyses were performed to examine the consistency of relationships between home socialization experiences and learning orientations across the three psychometric studies. The findings revealed a significant, positive relationship between the home environment and cultural orientation/learning preference variables in each of the three investigations. That is, the more African American children perceived the cultivation of communal beliefs and behaviors, movement-expressive attitudes and activities, or physical stimulus/vervistic activities in their home environment, the more they personally endorsed orientations toward or learning preferences for communalism, movement-expressiveness, or verve, respectively (see Table 4).

Table 3
Overall Internal Alpha Reliability Coefficients for the Home Environment and Cultural Orientation/Learning Preferences Measures

	Number of Cases	Number of Items	Alpha Coefficient
Communalism Study			
Home Communalism Measure (HCM)	89	20	.85
Personal Beliefs and Behaviors Measure (PBBM)	95	20	.83
Movement Study			
Home Movement Expressive Questionnaire (HMEQ)	93	18	.74
Child Activity Questionnaire (CAQ)	91	17	.85
Verve Study			
Home Stimulation Perception Questionnaire (HSPQ)	75	23	.82
Questionnaire of Stimuli Preference (QSP)	75	18	.69

Table 4
Overall Correlation Coefficients for the Home Environment and Cultural Orientation/Learning Preferences Measures

	Number of Cases	Correlation Coefficient	Significance Level
Communalism Study			
Home Communalism Measure (HCM) and Personal Beliefs and Behaviors Measure (PBBM)	98	.298**	.003
Movement Study			
Home Movement Expressive Questionnaire (HMEQ) and Child Activity Questionnaire (CAQ)	98	.678**	.0001
Verve Study			
Home Stimulation Perception Questionnaire (HSPQ) and Questionnaire of Stimuli Preference (QSP)	75	.411**	.0001

C. Analysis of Mean Differences

Analysis of variance tests were performed to determine significant differences in the home environment and cultural orientation/learning preference levels attributable to school, grade level, gender, age level, and order of protocol administration. No significant differences were found for any of the variables. As a result, these variables were not included in subsequent analyses and the findings reported are for the overall samples.

D. Descriptive Analysis

Means

The overall sample means for each measure are listed in Table 5. These findings reveal that African American children's perceptions and endorsements of communalism and movement in home cultural factors, orientations, and learning contexts were above the mid-point on each of the corresponding measures. Student perception of home stimulus activities, as measured by the HSPQ, and preference for physical stimulation in school contexts, as measured by the QSP, were slightly below and at the mid-point of the scales, respectively. These findings collectively suggest that, for some African American children, the home environment may be characterized and structured by frequently occurring family interactions and engagement in socialization practices that are informed by these Afro-cultural themes. Also, students' personally endorsed beliefs, behaviors, or learning preferences are informed by the endorsed values and cultural practices of family members in their homes.

The subscale means for each measure are listed in Table 6. Similarly, student endorsement levels for each of the home environmental measures and for the communalism and movement orientation measures were above the mid-point. The QSP (vervistic-orientation measure) subscales scores ranged from 1.77 for stimulus density (below the mid-point) to 2.10 and 2.23 for stimulus variability and stimulus intensity (slightly above the mid-point), respectively.

Table 5
Overall Means for Home Environment and Cultural Orientation Measures

	# of Cases	Min	Max	Scale Mid-point	Mean	Standard Deviation
Communalism Study						
Home Communalism Measure (HCM)	98	1.68	4.00	2.5	3.15	.47
Personal Beliefs and Behaviors Measure (PBBM)	98	1.35	4.00	2.5	3.05	.50
Movement Study						
Home Movement Expressive Questionnaire (HMEQ)	98	1.65	4.82	3.0	3.22	.62
Child Activity Questionnaire (CAQ)	97	1.12	4.76	3.0	3.33	.73
Verve Study						
Home Stimulation Perception Questionnaire (HSPQ)	75	1.61	4.30	3.0	2.75	.59
Questionnaire of Stimuli Preference (QSP)	75	1.39	2.78	2.0	2.05	.31

Table 6
Subscale Means for Home Environment and Cultural Orientation Measures

	# of Cases	Min	Max	Scale Mid-point	Mean	Standard Deviation
Communalism Study						
Home Communalism Measure (HCM)						
• Social Orientation	98	1.40	4.00	2.5	2.93	.56
• Group Duty	98	1.25	4.00	2.5	3.29	.51
• Identity	98	1.80	4.00	2.5	3.26	.58
• Sharing	98	1.25	4.00	2.5	3.14	.63
Personal Beliefs & Behaviors Measure (PBBM)						
• Social Orientation	98	1.20	4.00	2.5	3.13	.65
• Group Duty	98	1.40	4.00	2.5	3.14	.61
• Identity	98	1.00	4.00	2.5	2.88	.71
• Sharing	98	1.00	4.00	2.5	3.05	.56
Movement Study						
Home Movement Expressive Questionnaire (HMEQ)						
• Movement/Music Mosaic	98	1.00	5.00	3.0	3.50	.97
• Psychological Well-Being	98	1.67	5.00	3.0	3.23	.68
• Expansive Movement Repertoire	98	1.33	4.50	3.0	2.99	.72
Child Activity Questionnaire (CAQ)						
• Movement/Music Mosaic	97	1.00	5.00	3.0	3.49	.92
• Psychological Well-Being	97	1.40	5.00	3.0	3.60	.88
• Expansive Movement Repertoire	97	1.00	5.00	3.0	2.93	.88
Physical Stimulation Study						
Home Stimulation Perception Questionnaire (HSPQ)						
• Stimulus Intensity	75	1.70	4.80	3.0	2.92	.58
• Stimulus Variability	75	1.00	5.00	3.0	2.61	.96
• Stimulus Density	75	1.00	4.38	3.0	2.61	.74
Questionnaire of Stimuli Preference (QSP)						
• Stimulus Intensity	75	1.50	3.00	2.0	2.23	.33
• Stimulus Variability	75	1.14	2.86	2.0	2.10	.40
• Stimulus Density	75	1.00	2.86	2.0	1.77	.45

Frequencies

A. Communalism Context

Home Environment

The frequency distribution of students' endorsements of the HCM subscale items are displayed in Table 7. Approximately 71% of the sample reported the cultivation of a social orientation in their home environment. Approximately 83% reported that their family members

hold the belief that "the family as a whole is more important than individual rights and privileges" and endorsed "a positive sense of duty to the well-being of the family unit." Approximately 82% perceived members of their families as having an identity tied to the family as opposed to material possessions or individual status. Lastly, 81% of the student sample agreed that the notion of "sharing and cooperating with family members so that the whole family benefits" is embraced by their family members.

Cultural Orientation

Table 8 reveals the frequency distribution of student endorsements of PBBM subscale items. A communal social orientation was espoused by approximately 75% of the student sample, who indicated that they valued the importance of "duty to their group and group members." Approximately 82% noted that their identification was more tied to their group membership rather than individual possessions or individual accomplishments. The idea of "helping and sharing with others so that all benefit" was shared by approximately 73% of the students.

Table 7
Frequency Distribution of Endorsements on
Home Communalism Measure Items by Subscale

	Frequency	Percent
Social Orientation Subscale		
Family sits together, does different things and is near each other in same room	39	39.8
Family talks to each other often, shares about day's events and activities	73	74.5
Family does things together, usually as a group, comes together daily	71	72.5
Family and friends visit often, we usually share time doing things together	69	70.4
Family and friends from out-of-town stays over, visits w/other family members	77	78.6
Group Duty Subscale		
Older members take care of younger ones first, ensure that all have enough	83	87.4
Family takes care of one another, when one is in need, all try to be supportive	92	93.8
Family usually does things together that everyone likes, usually no one is left out	69	70.4
Everyone pitches in around the house, all help and work together	80	82.4
Family helps each other w/chores, important to complete work than who does it	76	78.3
Identity Subscale		
Family is important, we are a part of family and family is a part of us	90	91.8
Family feels lost without each other, is more important than having fancy things	84	85.7
Family is more important than a lot of money, loves each other even in want	75	79.0
Family members have a lot in common, play a big part in who we are	85	86.7
Family listens to older members tell about past, learns about our similarities	64	65.3
Sharing Subscale		
Family is expected to share, gets in trouble if we don't share, important to share	76	77.5
Family discourages selfishness, expects us to share, usually shares with all	78	79.6
Older members tell younger ones to play together and share, we share our things	79	81.5
Family buys things to share, we are expected to share w/others so all benefit	79	80.7
Family shares almost everything, shares even w/limited resources	84	85.7

Table 8
Frequency Distribution of Endorsements on
Personal Beliefs and Behaviors Measure Items by Subscale

	Frequency	Percent
Social Orientation Subscale		
Participates in group activities more than working alone, likes interacting w/group	75	76.5
Spends time w/people, shares a special bond, friends are more important than things	82	83.7
Spends a lot of time w/people w/shared interests, being alone makes her/him sad	60	61.3
Students should always study in groups, all can achieve more by working together	79	80.6
Spends time w/people who think friendships are important	74	76.3
Group Duty Subscale		
Everyone in group benefits when they work together, group should support members	60	61.2
Does all possible for family and friend in need, feels strong sense of group duty	84	85.8
Cares about helping group, feels sense of responsibility, does what's best for group	72	73.5
Helping family and friends comes before own needs, their needs are more important	76	77.6
Places group's needs before own, can depend on group when she/he needs help	76	77.5
Identity Subscale		
People should be known by those w/whom they spend time than things they own	58	59.2
Feels proud to be associated w/group that she/he and others respect	74	75.5
People are known by their friends, she/he knows about self via connection w/group	60	61.2
Belonging to group is special, members help to make her/him who she/he is	74	70.4
Likes identifying w/group that she/he cares about, makes her/him feel good about self	73	75.3
Sharing Subscale		
Helps/shares w/others, those who don't share are selfish and don't value friendships	69	71.1
People should depend on one another, put others first, she/he often helps classmates	75	76.6
People should share knowledge so all do well, helping is something she/he should do	80	81.7
Expects others to share as she/he shares, frowns on those who don't feel the same	55	56.1
Encourages cooperation when working w/others, urges people to share w/each other	75	76.6

B. Movement Context

Home Environment

The frequency distribution of student endorsements of HMEQ subscale items are illustrated in Table 9. Approximately 72% of the sample perceived their home environment as "cultivating a movement, music, and rhythmic orientation." Approximately 62% agreed that "movement and music are vital to their family members' psychological well-being." Lastly, the perception that family members "manifest a rich and expansive movement and gestural repertoire" was held by approximately 60% of the students.

Table 9
Frequency Distribution of Endorsements of
Home Movement Expressive Questionnaire Items by Subscale

	Frequency	Percent
Movement/Music Mosaic		
People in the home dance a lot	64	75.4
People in the home clap their hands or tap their feet to music they like	67	68.4
People in the home dance and clap while moving around the house	52	53.1
People in home snap their fingers, pat their feet, and move their heads to beat of music	78	80.4
People in home dance whenever music is on	81	83.5
Psychological Well-Being		
Music is on in home	81	83.5
People in the home seem happier when music is on	78	80.4
Music and dancing seem to make people in the home feel better when sad	59	60.1
Music seems to give people in the home a lot of energy for the day	51	52.6
People in the home seem to laugh more when music is on	52	53.0
Listening and dancing to music seem to make people in the home feel good	80	81.7
People in the home seem to have more energy while working when music is on	75	77.4
Expansive Movement Repertoire		
People in the home move their hands a lot when they talk	58	59.1
Action games such as running and jumping are played in the home	72	73.4
People in the home move their bodies a lot when they talk	36	36.8
There is a lot of movement in the home	89	90.8
People in the home imitate the gestures of others when telling a story about them	44	44.9
People in the home move their hands, tap their feet and wiggle all at the same time	53	54.0

Cultural Orientation

The frequency distribution of student endorsements of CAQ subscale items is displayed in Table 10. Approximately 72% of the sample indicated having a preference for rhythmic movement-expressiveness in combination with music. Approximately 88% noted that movement and music contribute to their psychological health. Finally, approximately 58% reported displaying extensive movements and gestures. Of those remaining, approximately 22% and approximately 20% indicated that they rarely or almost never performed these types of movements and gestures, respectively.

Table 10
Frequency Distribution of Endorsements of
Child Activity Questionnaire Items by Subscale

	Frequency	Percent
Movement and Music Mosaic		
A party must have music or it's not really a party	90	92.8
One should not sit still when she/he is listening to music	65	67.8
Drum beats are essential for enjoyable music	64	66.0
Like to clap hand and tap feet when music is on	69	71.1
Have to dance when listening to music	70	72.9
Prefer to listen to story about the "Dancing Musical Bear" than the "Sitting Bear"	60	61.9
Psychological Well-Being		
Need music in life	60	61.9
Good music puts her/him in a good mood	82	84.5
Feels happier when music is on	69	72.7
Prefers to sing aloud to music rather then sit and listen quietly	80	82.5
Feels happier when playing action games such as jumping and running	76	78.4
Expansive Movement Repertoire		
Prefers for body to be moving	65	67.0
Moves body a lot when talking	44	45.8
There are many ways that she/he moves body	76	79.2
Moves a lot while watching television	51	53.2
Uses hands and body a lot when speaking	48	49.5
Shakes hands using different hand movements	49	51.0

C. Physical Stimulation Context

Home Environment

Table 11 displays the frequency distribution of student endorsements of HSPQ subscale items. Loud and lively physical stimulus (verve) activities were reported to occur in the home environments of approximately 58% of the sample. Approximately 25% and 17% of the students revealed that such verve-intensive activities rarely or almost never occurred in their homes, respectively. Approximately 51% indicated that family members alternate among or engage in a variety of physical stimulus activities in their homes. Of the remaining students, approximately 17% indicated that these activities did not occur much in their homes, and approximately 32% indicated that they almost never occurred. With respect to the density of home stimulus activities, approximately 53% of the students characterized their homes as ones in which several stimulus events typically occurred at the same time. Conversely, 21% and 26% reported that activities of such density rarely and almost never occurred within their homes, respectively.

Table 11
Frequency Distribution of Endorsements of
Home Stimulation Perception Questionnaire Items by Subscale

	Frequency	Percent
Verve/Stimulus Intensity		
Television is on in the home	71	94.7
Music playing, dancing, or hand clapping goes on in the home	39	52.0
Music is played loudly in the home	40	53.4
Television volume is up loudly in the home	21	28.0
Video games are played in the home	47	62.7
Family members visit or spend the night at the home	53	70.6
Friends visit or spend the night at the home	32	42.7
Singing or rappin' goes on in the home	44	58.7
Loud talking goes on in the home	40	53.4
Running, play fighting, wrestling, or games like "tag" go on in the home	48	64.0
Verve/Stimulus Variability		
Switch TV channels back and forth to watch another program during same time period	55	73.3
Switch radio channels back and forth to listen to another channel during same period	43	57.3
Switch from doing one activity to doing second activity then returning to first activity	34	45.4
Switch from doing one activity, to second, then to third activity in a short time period	26	34.6
Perform several other activities at a time in between performing one specific activity	32	42.6
Verve/Stimulus Density		
Read, study, or do homework w/TV, music or talking going on in background	39	52.0
Eat dinner together in same room w/TV, music, or talking going on in background	42	56.1
Eat dinner together in separate rooms w/TV, music, or talking going on in background	41	54.7
Eat dinner together in same room w/TV and with talking going on in background	38	50.6
Eat dinner together in separate rooms w/TV and with talking going on in background	33	44.0
People in home carry on more than one conversation at the same time	39	52.0
A lot of activities go on together at the same time in the same room	36	48.0
A lot of activities go on together at the same time in the different rooms	44	58.7

Cultural Orientation

Table 12 displays the frequency distribution of student endorsements of QSP subscale items. Approximately 77% of the sample indicated a preference for moderate to loud, lively, or high-energy school activities and environments. Approximately 65% expressed preference for the use of a variety of learning and teaching strategies in school as well as alternation among activities and tasks. Approximately 53% expressed a preference for class and school environments in which several activities occur at the same time or in which background stimulation, usually music, is present while they are engaging in a particular task.

Table 12
Frequency Distribution of Endorsements of Questionnaire of Stimuli Preference Items by Subscale

	Frequency	Percent
Verve/Stimulus Intensity		
Play, talk, and laugh at least at normal level and make at least a little noise	69	92.0
Music on at least softly during gym class	52	69.4
Listen to at least soft music during recess	53	70.6
Put at least some energy into playing favorite sport or game in gym class	74	98.7
Read with at least soft music during reading period	35	46.6
Teacher should teach with at least some enthusiasm, excitement, or energy	65	86.7
Verve/Stimulus Variability		
Switch between playing at least two different games or activities during gym class	41	54.6
Teacher should use at least a few different types of class activities to teach a lesson	65	86.6
Switch back and forth between two homework tasks until done, then do next two tasks	27	36.0
Pay attention between tasks if teacher uses at least a few different ways of teaching	51	68.0
At least read and watch a video about plants when learning about them in science	67	89.3
Switch between at least a few types of formats during a history class presentation	47	62.7
Play a ball game at least a few different ways each time	53	70.7
Stimulus/Verve Density		
Play where at least two different play activities are going on at the same time	38	50.7
Music on in the background during gym class	52	69.4
Do homework with at least the TV, radio, or people talking in the background	24	32.0
Prefer classes where students talk freely and two activities occur at same time	36	48.0
Music on in the background during reading	35	46.6
Prefer seeing/hearing a few different activities at the same time during lunch	40	53.3
Do at least a few things at the same time when with friends	42	56.0

Discussion of the Findings

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the home socialization experiences, values, practices, and preferences of African American school children from low-income backgrounds. This research, however, accomplished three objectives. First, it determined the internal consistency and reliability of the home environment and cultural orientation measures that assessed the students' preferences for activities that are consistent with the targeted Afro-cultural themes (communalism, movement, and verve). Second, it determined the levels of the students' endorsement of Afro-cultural home and cultural orientation factors, along with the pattern of relationships between home socialization experiences and cultural preferences across the three Afro-cultural themes. Third, it provided a descriptive analysis of the influence of home environmental and cultural factors on the students' cultural orientation and learning preferences.

The results of this research contribute to understandings about low-income African American children's home/cultural socialization experiences and the influence of these experiences on these children's cultural orientation and preferences for learning and achievement contexts. Among the salient findings reported for the sample of low-income, urban African American children in the study are that:

1. The children report a prevalence of communal, movement-expressive, or vervistic attitudes and practices that are cultivated by family members in their home environments;

2. The children endorse beliefs, practices, and learning orientations consistent with the Afro-cultural themes of communalism, movement-expressiveness, and verve;

3. The more the children encounter Afro-cultural home socialization experiences, the more they also endorse attitudes, preferences, or learning orientations reflecting these Afro-cultural themes; and

4. The children endorse learning orientations, as well as prefer classroom practices and learning contexts that are more consistent with their commonly prescribed familial values or routinely practiced home activities.

The results of the psychometric analysis provide support for the reliability of the home environment and cultural orientation measures. The alpha estimates of reliability for the Home Communalism Measure (HCM), the Home Stimulation Perception Questionnaire (HSPQ), the Personal Beliefs and Behaviors Measure (PBBM), and the Child Activity Questionnaire (CAQ) were high at .85, .82, .83, and .85, respectively. The estimates for the Home Movement Expressive Questionnaire (HMEQ) and the Questionnaire of Stimuli Preference (QSP) were considerably lower at .74 and .69, respectively. Although the alpha coefficients for the HMEQ and QSP are considered moderate and modest, respectively, by conventional standards, they are considered acceptable for child self-report measures. Estimates of alpha reliability for these self-report measures in previous investigations were also within the modest-to-moderate, conventional ranges. In light of the estimates for these measures from previous studies, the internal consistency estimates for both the HMEQ and the QSP were within the expected range. This supports the stability of these instruments in the measurement of home movement-expressiveness and stimuli preference, respectively.

Notwithstanding arguments for the internal consistency of these two measures, these instruments can be further refined. For instance, by deleting scale items that yielded low reliability ratings, the internal reliability coefficients of the revised versions of the HMEQ and

QSP increased to .78 and .75, respectively. Future investigations should focus more directly on examining the test-rest reliability and the stability of these phenomena.

Analysis of group differences were performed among grade levels (second, third, and fifth) and between genders (female and male) to examine variances in home socialization and learning preferences. No significant group differences were found on these variables. These findings suggest that African American second-, third-, and fifth-grade elementary children from low-income backgrounds share common socialization experiences and cultural identities.

The research found that the sampled African American children generally reported high levels of communalism, movement-expressiveness, and verve in their home environments. The children also indicated preferences for beliefs, practices, and contexts in school that reflect these three Afro-cultural themes. Similar to the findings of previous research (see Boykin & Bailey, 2000), these results provide additional evidence that the identified themes are powerfully manifested in the home experiences of low-income, urban African American children. Indeed, in many cases, these themes guided and mediated the children's value and behavioral and learning orientations.

Correlation analysis examined the relationship between these African American children's home experiences and their learning orientations. The results of the analysis suggest significant positive relationships between the children's perceptions of Afro-cultural themes cultivated in the home environment and their preferences for practices and contexts characterized by these themes. Similarly, these replicated findings lend credence to the claim that many low-income, urban African American children endorse or have appropriated Afro-cultural themes into their value and meaning systems. Apparently, these themes are acquired through the children's frequent contact and day-to-day experiences with significant family members within their culturally structured home environments (Peters & Boggs, 1986).

Lastly, descriptive analysis revealed that the African American children in our sample more frequently endorsed or preferred instructional practices and achievement contexts that were characterized by greater levels of communalism, movement-expressiveness, and verve. More than 70% of the children reported preferring:

1. communal learning contexts that promote such activities as, sharing of knowledge and materials, as well as working and studying together in groups so that all members can achieve;

2. school contexts that allow for music and movement opportunity and expressiveness; and

3. school contexts that employ a variety of vervistic, high-energy pedagogical and learning strategies.

Numerous studies have discerned the various effects of contexts infused with the Afro-cultural themes of communalism, movement-expressiveness, and verve on cognitive and motivational outcomes for African American children from low-income backgrounds across a range of academic skills. Indeed, the research literature suggests that learning and performance contexts that are more responsive to children's familiar and existing home/cultural experiences may facilitate cognitive functioning and, consequently, achievement. These effects have been discerned across a range of cognitive outcomes including academic problem-solving tasks (Boykin & Bailey, 2000; Bailey, 1996; Bailey & Walton, 1994) and experimental problem-solving tasks (Boykin, 1978, 1979, 1982; Boykin, Allen, Davis, & Senior, 1997; Tuck & Boykin, 1989; Walton, 1997); higher-order creative problem solving tasks (Coleman & Dill, 1996); and direct factual recall of and higher-order inferential reasoning with orally presented (Allen & Butler, 1996; Allen & Boykin, 1991; Boykin & Allen, 1988; Boykin & Mungai, 1997; Boykin & Cunningham, in press) and textbook reading material (Dill & Boykin, in press). Apparently, knowledge of Afro-cultural themes can serve to inform the implementation of culturally salient, intrinsically motivating classroom pedagogy. This knowledge can also inform the creation of contexts that build on the cultural assets of these children for the purposes of improving teaching and learning (Boykin, in press). Within such culturally informed, sensitive, and responsive contexts, children may be more encouraged to employ their existing or emerging abilities. They may also be more intrinsically motivated to achieve and further develop their talents as a result.

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